

Council of 100

**STATEMENT OF MILTON BINS
CHAIRMAN
COUNCIL OF 100**

**July 27, 1995
Washington, D.C.**

The Council of 100, a national network of African American Republicans founded in 1974, applauds the leadership and measured approach taken by Sen. Bob Dole today in introducing the "Equal Opportunity Act of 1995." This act provides a unifying and coherent framework in which to foster inclusion and equal opportunity for all Americans without discriminating against any American on the basis of race, color, national origin or sex.

The long-delayed national conversation about the role of the federal government in promoting equal opportunity will now take place where it should: in the Congress of the United States. It is time for the American people to speak through their elected representatives as we build a new national consensus in support of inclusion, fairness and equal protection of the law.

A fair reading of the act will allay concerns that the legislation represents the "opening salvo" of a Republican-led assault on affirmative action, and is part of a plan to roll back the gains African Americans in particular have made over the past 30 years. Rather, its purpose is to remove a major roadblock—group preferences—that divide and Balkanize Americans along racial, ethnic and gender lines as we struggle to build an opportunity society for all of us.

The act calls for vigorous enforcement of nondiscrimination laws. It leaves in place remedies to redress discrimination available under any law, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It does not prohibit voluntary efforts such as minority outreach and recruitment. In fact, casting a wider net to increase the pool of qualified applicants is expressly encouraged. The act also exempts historically black colleges and universities in recognition of their unique role in fostering educational opportunities for all Americans.

The myopic fixation on past wrongs that can never be righted and on remedies that have had limited impact on expanding employment and business opportunities keep African Americans looking backwards. While we "cannot escape history," we do not have to be trapped by our history. As Frederick Douglass said, "We have to do with the past only as we can make it useful to the present and to the future." We believe the future will belong to those who are prepared and who are willing to compete in a knowledge-based, global economy.

Today begins the hard work of formulating a new paradigm for equal opportunity for all Americans. The Council of 100 looks forward to working with Sen. Dole as he points us toward the future with the "Equal Opportunity Act of 1995."

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